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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 22 July 1996, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire)

CONTENTS

COORDINATION QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATICS (continued)

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(e) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

(f) SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

COORDINATION QUESTIONS (continued) (E/1996/L.27)

(b) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATICS (continued)

Mr. KOVANDA (Czech Republic), introducing draft resolution E/1996/L.27 on the need to harmonize and improve United Nations informatics systems for optimal utilization and accessibility by all States, said that Bulgaria and the Dominican Republic had joined its sponsors. While substantial progress had been achieved in improving access to United Nations information systems and databases the situation was still far from ideal. Accordingly, it was proposed that the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group should continue for one more year.

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (continued) (E/1996/L.28)

(a) SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon), introducing draft resolution E/1996/L.28 on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, said that Brazil, China and Syria should be added to the list of sponsors. He hoped that the draft resolution could be adopted by consensus.

(e) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (A/51/16 (Part I), A/51/38; E/1996/16, E/1996/26, E/1996/39, E/1996/56, E/1996/71, E/1996/82; E/1996/NGO/3 and NGO/6)

Ms. KING (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women) introducing the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (E/1996/16) which contained the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, said that the plan would be crucial in mobilizing the United Nations system behind the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The revised plan, which should be read in conjunction with the comments of the Commission on the Status of Women (contained in its resolution 40/10 and annex) and those of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, contained in document E/AC.51/1996/L.5/Add.34, followed the structure of the Platform for Action and incorporated gender-related recommendations coming from other global conferences. Its main purpose was to serve as an instrument for promoting a coordinated system-wide implementation of the Platform for Action, by providing

a basis for improved coordination of activities in mainstreaming of the gender perspective, and a baseline for monitoring the progress made in that regard.

The Council also had before it the report of the Secretary-General on ways and means to enhance the capacity of the Organization and the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, (E/1996/82) which detailed steps taken by subsidiary bodies of the Council to deal with the question as well as actions taken at the inter-agency level.

Finally, the Council also had before it an interim report on violence against women migrant workers (E/1996/71) which contained the recommendations of an expert group meeting convened in Manila in May 1996.

Ms. DUENAS LOZÁ (Acting Director, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)), introducing the report of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for Women, contained in document E/1996/56, said that the research carried out by INSTRAW since its establishment 20 years earlier had brought about an important evolution in the understanding of the main obstacles to the advancement of women. Such issues as recognition of the social and economic value of the non-remunerated work performed by women, gender disaggregated data, the relationship between the status of women and their access to natural resources and the relationship between social insecurity and women's migration had currently been incorporated into the everyday work of institutions within the United Nations system.

Finally, recalling that women still comprised 70 per cent of the world's poorest and two thirds of the world's illiterate, she said that in order to mainstream the concept of gender in all social sectors, and not just in the industrialized countries, it was essential to bear in mind the following few criteria: empowerment, equality, productivity and sustainability.

Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that those States reiterated their commitment to the implementation of the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. One of the most important factors in its implementation was the mobilization of new and additional resources. The follow-up to the Conference should be undertaken on the basis of an integrated approach to the advancement of women, within the framework of coordinated follow-up to the results of major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields, as well as

the overall responsibilities of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Commission on the Status of Women should act as a catalyst in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes. The Platform for Action should be implemented through the work of all parts of the United Nations system during the period 1995-2000, and in addition, those institutions especially devoted to the advancement of women should review their programmes of work in its light. Since non-governmental organizations had traditionally played an important role in the advancement of women, their participation in the implementation process should be encouraged.

Finally, turning to draft resolution II in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women, she said that the Group supported the work programme outlined in section IV and reiterated its support for the regional dimension, referred to in section V.

Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed the hope that the Council would contribute to the follow-up on the Beijing Conference by adopting the mainstreaming of the gender perspective within the United Nations system as a common theme for discussion at its 1997 coordination segment. Given the importance of resources for the follow up to the Beijing Conference, the European Union looked forward to the Secretary-General's proposals in that regard.

Turning to the report of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/1996/26), he said that the Union supported the adoption of draft resolution II, which, inter alia, established a framework for the functioning of that body, and the agreed conclusions (1996/1) concerning the Commission's methods of work. Those new methods of work had already proved positive.

At the same time he believed that more time should be devoted to panel discussions and less to the general debate. The Bureau should select a relatively small number of panellists and offer inter-sessional briefings on priority themes for short and focused discussions. Secretariat reports should be action-driven, providing specific recommendations and should be communicated to the Commission and others at an early stage. The Secretariat should allocate adequate time for discussion of draft conclusions, and should include recommendations in its reports to facilitate the formulation of agreed conclusions. More thought should be given, too, to ways of including civil society in Commission debate.

The European Union supported the renewal of the mandate of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, believing that all States should participate actively, in its work and that it should be allowed to hold formal meetings, supported by full conference services.

The Union also supported the Council's adoption of the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2000, and hoped that the newly created Inter-Agency Committee on Advancement and Employment of Women would reflect the cross-cutting nature of gender issues in its objectives and activities.

As INSTRAW continued its review process, it should seek to improve its cooperation with other parts of the United Nations system, focusing on issues central to its mandate and providing more detailed analyses of its activities. It was essential that INSTRAW should have the requisite informational and human resources to reflect its research and training functions.

Ms. HOLIKOVA (Czech Republic) said that the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration should be viewed as the key instruments for achieving progress in the advancement of women and mainstreaming their human rights. The Czech Republic had turned to those instruments as a guide to future goals and ways of addressing existing problems. The functional commissions and other relevant bodies should do their part to ensure greater harmonization and coordination of work, particularly with regard to women and poverty.

Mrs. LIMJUCO (Philippines) said that women represented a growing proportion of unprotected migrant workers on the international labour market. The expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers, held in Manila in May 1996, had recognized the need for a specific analysis of the human rights of such workers in order to identify and categorize the abuses they suffered. The final report of the expert group meeting should concentrate on the victimization of women migrant workers and on means of protecting the rights of such workers.

Mr. COLOMA (Chile) said that the medium-term plan for women should refer explicitly to the relationship that should exist between the Commission on the Status of Women and the revitalized Commission on Social Development, calling on the two to work together to develop an integrated gender perspective on United Nations activities for poverty eradication.

Chile welcomed the establishment of the new Inter-Agency Committee on women to ensure integrated follow-up to Beijing and Copenhagen, and supported the work of the related task forces and agencies seeking to advance the cause of women at the regional and country levels. It hoped that the medium-term plan would incorporate the comments of the Council, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Commission on the Status of Women.

Ms. GORDON (Jamaica) said that the reports before the Council clearly demonstrated the intensive and challenging nature of the Beijing follow-up process, and the need for ongoing commitment to it. Jamaica would continue to support efforts by United Nations agencies and bodies, particularly in the areas of women and poverty, education and training, violence against women and children and inequality in power-sharing and decision-making. The medium-term plan for women should be adopted, taking into account the comments of ACC and the Commission on the Status of Women.

Mrs. SANDRU (Romania) informed the Council that Romania would host a subregional conference in September 1996, aimed at appraising the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Central and Eastern Europe. The conference would focus on three main themes: national plans of action, national capacity-building for the advancement of women and enlistment of non-governmental organizations and civil society in the follow-up process. Participants from a range of governmental and non-governmental institutions would be invited, with a view to mainstreaming the gender perspective in the democratic reforms of Central and Eastern Europe.

Ms. ACUNER (Observer for Turkey) said that the report of ACC on the proposed medium-term plan for the advancement of women (E/1996/16) was rather too broad in its terms of reference and should have outlined the specific tasks to be accomplished by each agency in the four main action areas.

Additional funding should be provided to the main women's organizations in the United Nations, while any institutional change required for the follow-up activities should be made within the framework of the overall restructuring of the United Nations system. INSTRAW, which had skilfully managed its limited resources, should also report to the Second Committee on issues concerning the environment, migration and natural resources.

Ms. PARK (Observer for the Republic of Korea) said that the Commission on the Status of Women should act as a catalyst in mainstreaming the gender

perspective in policies and programmes. The Commission was to be praised for its innovative approach to including civil society in its work, which should help sharpen its focus on practical action.

Violence against women, particularly sexual abuse and abuse in conflict situations, continued to represent one of the most flagrant violations of women's basic rights. It was encouraging to note that the United Nations had appointed a special rapporteur on that subject, and that the Commission on the Status of Women had adopted resolution 40/3 concerning the mainstreaming of women's rights.

With regard to the feminization of poverty, the international community and financial institutions should assist developing countries in their efforts to eliminate that phenomenon.

While the United Nations should integrate the gender perspective in all of its activities, Governments, too, needed to address that issue by looking at the composition of delegations which they sent to various international forums.

Mr. TELLES RIBEIRO (Brazil) said that the best way of measuring how much support there really was for United Nations efforts on behalf of women was to look at what individual countries were doing to advance women's rights within their own borders. Brazil had moved more quickly than it might have done, had there not been the studies and programmes prepared by the United Nations, to incorporate various directives and declarations on women's issues into its national constitution. Other Governments, too, aware of the growing interdependence between multilateral and national policy efforts, were making changes to their legislation that would affect the dynamics of their societies. Brazil was proud to be part of that process and looked forward to the challenges that lay ahead.

Ms. BOZHKOVA (Bulgaria) welcomed the innovative methods of work outlined in the agreed conclusions 1996/1 adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, particularly those relating to the participation of experts outlined in paragraph 5. The general debate remained an important means for Governments to express their views on a variety of issues and enough time should therefore be set aside for it.

Her delegation shared the Commission's view that the organizations of the United Nations system must adopt an integrated approach to the implementation of the results of the recent global conferences. It believed, moreover, that

implementation of the outcomes of the five regional preparatory conferences which had preceded the Fourth World Conference on Women were essential to the implementation of the Platform for Action. Against that background, Bulgaria welcomed the establishment of an inter-agency committee on women as a means of promoting cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the other gender-related recommendations emanating from the other global conferences. In that connection, also, the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 should be implemented by all organizations of the United Nations system in the light of the relevant comments of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Ms. TAMLYN (United States of America) said that the Commission on the Status of Women's new programme of work and, in particular the proposal to invite more expert participation, had the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the Commission's work by fostering the free flow of ideas and experiences. Panel discussions should provide a forum for experts to discuss which approaches had succeeded and which ones had not. She hoped that Member States would include experts in their delegations to the Commission's forty-first session who could not only speak with authority during the substantive discussions but also return home to participate in the implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

The Commission had an important role to play in assisting Governments, non-governmental organizations and other organizations of the United Nations system in implementing the Platform for Action. Its activities should include monitoring the progress made and the problems encountered as well as identifying those areas in which further action was needed and trends that adversely affected the situation of women.

The United States supported the proposed merging of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) since that would strengthen coordination of research and training activities while at the same time reducing administrative costs and serving as a model for similar initiatives in the context of the overall restructuring of the United Nations.

Mrs. KABA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Division for the Advancement of Women should ensure that the gender perspective was integrated into the

programmes and activities of the different organizations of the United Nations system at the national, regional and international levels. She noted that the Beijing Platform for Action had also called upon the United Nations organizations and the Bretton Woods institutions to incorporate the gender perspective into their respective programmes and strategies. She therefore deeply regretted the absence from the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa of any reference to the important role of women in poverty eradication. The Special Initiative had mentioned the role of women only in terms of food security, thereby neglecting the tremendous potential of African women to contribute to the implementation of the initiative and to participate in all aspects of the development of Africa.

Mr. KOZIY (Observer for Ukraine) said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were important instruments for improving the status of women in society at both the national and regional levels. The various organs of the United Nations system could contribute to the that goal through better coordination of their efforts on behalf of women. For its part, the Commission on the Status of Women could play a useful role in the development of policies for the implementation of the Platform for Action.

His delegation supported the proposed revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, particularly since the bulk of the plan was geared towards developing countries and countries with economies in transition. In light of the current financial crisis, however, the plan must be funded from within existing resources.

Mr. KHRYSKOV (Russian Federation) said that the Commission on the Status of Women had done valuable work at its fortieth session to promote the implementation of the Platform for Action and to coordinate the activities of the United Nations system on behalf of women. It was important, however, that the documents emanating from United Nations organizations should contain practical recommendations that could be implemented at the national level. The United Nations should also issue periodic bulletins on the implementation of the recommendations of the global conferences at the country level.

The proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women was a potentially valuable instrument for enhancing the status of women. In pursuit of that goal, the Government of the Russian Federation had enacted a series of

legislative instruments at both the federal and state levels and had established an independent commission to monitor their implementation.

Mr. AL-HITTI (Observer for Iraq) said that legislation currently in force in Iraq amply ensured that women enjoyed equal status with men. Iraq had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the gender perspective had been integrated into the programmes and activities of Government agencies, particularly those working in the areas of health, education and social welfare. At the political level, there were currently more than 20 women members of the Iraqi parliament.

Tragically, however, the efforts of Iraq on behalf of women were severely undermined by the international blockade against the country, which had the greatest impact on the disadvantaged sectors of the society, including women, children and the elderly. The principles of equality and peace adumbrated at the Beijing conference could not be translated into reality until there was equality among States. UNICEF, FAO and other humanitarian agencies had confirmed that more than half a million children had died in Iraq because of the lack of food and medicine. Millions more continued to suffer from malnutrition and disease. Indeed the total deaths caused by the blockade exceeded the number of those killed in the bombing of Hiroshima. The blockade had thus become a weapon of mass destruction and an insult to mankind, despite the admonition contained in the Platform for Action that blockades should not be employed to halt the economic and social development of States and to deny their populations access to food and basic health services. The current situation facing Iraq was a denial of the civil rights of its population and a flagrant flouting of international human rights instruments.

He therefore appealed to the Council to consider the situation of the women and children of Iraq and to send them a message that they were not forgotten by the international community.

Mr. VARCHAVER (Inter-Parliamentary Union) said that the commitments undertaken at the Fourth World Conference on Women were national commitments and must therefore be implemented at the national level, including through parliamentary action. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) had participated in the preparatory process for the Beijing Conference and was currently working on the follow-up to the recommendations contained in the Platform for Action. The Union's actions included the launching of a new world survey on the

participation of women in political life, which should result by the end of the year in a world comparative study of women in political parties, women as actors in and beneficiaries of the electoral process, and women in parliament. A round table for the media was also being organized in New Delhi in February 1997 to examine the portrayal of women politicians in the media. In addition, the Union's upcoming meeting in Beijing would consider the issues of women as victims of poverty and the role of women in eradicating poverty.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO was undertaking a wide-ranging programme of activities in support of the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001. In addition to the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all programmes, special projects on women were being implemented in a variety of areas. As a result, the Organization's programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 as it related to women and gender had been increased by 22 per cent over the previous biennium.

In terms of strategy, UNESCO would focus its actions on the following areas: women and poverty; women and education and training; women and health; violence against women; women in armed conflict, peace and conflict resolution; women in the economy; women in decision-making; mechanisms to promote the advancement of women; human rights of women; women and the media; and women and the environment.

Mrs. VAUGHN (Zonta International) said that Zonta International represented executive women all over the world in countries at varying levels of development. The organization was dedicated to the ideal of service and had a long history of collaboration with United Nations bodies. Zonta's stated priorities coincided with those of the Beijing Conference. It had implemented programmes to combat violence against women and children and tackle the problem of unequal access to health care and suppression of women's human rights. Zonta had also been instrumental in initiating projects designed to improve educational prospects for girls.

The PRESIDENT said that he took it that the Council wished to take note of the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/51/38), the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 (E/1996/16), the note of the Secretary-General transmitting the report

of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (E/1996/56), the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers, including the report of the expert group (E/1996/71) and the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in implementation of the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and on ways to enhance the capacity of the United Nations to support follow-up (E/1996/82).

Mr. REZVANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that although it was stated in the preface of document E/1996/16 that the comments of the Committee for Programme and Coordination had been taken into account, certain points of view mentioned in the draft and final reports of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (documents E/AC.51/1996/L.5/Add.34 and A/51/16 (Part I) respectively) had not found their way into document E/1996/16. Specifically, some delegations had suggested (E/AC.51/1996/L.5/Add.34, para.2) that the words "under parental supervision" should be inserted after the words "girls and boys" in the sixth line of paragraph 92 of document E/1996/16. That suggestion had not been reflected. In addition, certain delegations had objected strongly (E/AC.51/1996/L.5/Add.34, para. 3) to the term "individuals" as contained in paragraphs 71 and 93 of document E/1996/16, but the word had nevertheless been retained. Finally, although it was stated (E/AC.51/1996/L.5/Add.34, para. 26 and A/51/16 (Part I), para. 185) that activities relating to paragraph 243 (f) of the Beijing Platform for Action should be envisaged in the plan, no such reference had been made in paragraph 202 of document E/1996/16.

His delegation trusted that the Secretariat would be able to clarify the reason for the omissions and make the necessary corrections.

The PRESIDENT said that the Council took note of the remarks made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and on that basis he took it that the Council wished to take note of the reports he had enumerated earlier.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on the draft resolutions and draft decisions contained in the report of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/1996/26).

Draft resolution I: Palestinian women

At the request of the representative of the United States of America, a recorded vote was taken.

In favour: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

Against: United States of America.

Abstaining: Russian Federation.

Draft resolution I was adopted by 46 votes to 1, with 1 abstention.

Ms. TAMLYN (United States of America) said that her delegation did not believe that the Economic and Social Council was the appropriate forum to discuss issues which should be sorted out bilaterally by the various parties in the Middle East. In addition, the resolution failed to take account of the considerable progress that had been made in the region since the inauguration of the peace process.

Mr. AKBAR (Pakistan) said that, had he been present for the vote, he would have voted in favour of the draft resolution.

Ms. WONG (Australia) said that her Government was committed to supporting efforts to achieve a just and enduring peace in the Middle East on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Finding ways to implement those resolutions was in the fundamental interests of the parties themselves. Bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority should be allowed to run their proper course without being pre-empted by any resolution before the Economic and Social Council. Her Government had reservations about some parts of the resolution which sought to pre-empt questions relating to the permanent status of Jerusalem and the return of refugees. While her government supported, in principle, the right of Palestinians to return or to receive compensation, the question should nevertheless be addressed in the context of an overall peace settlement.

The basic aspiration of the resolution which the Council had just adopted was to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East; for that reason

her Government had supported it while reserving its position on certain aspects of its wording.

Mr. TENNE (Observer for Israel) said that the resolution just adopted had more to do with Middle Eastern politics than it did with the rights of Palestinian women. The United Nations was not an appropriate forum to deal with the issues raised by the resolution. Direct talks between the parties were the only effective means of sorting out the region's problems.

Draft resolution II: Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

Draft resolution II was adopted.

Draft decision I: Renewal of the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Draft decision I was adopted.

Draft decision II: Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its fortieth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the forty-first session of the Commission

Draft decision II was adopted.

(f) SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS (E/1996/29, E/1996/NGO/5, E/1996/CRP.2)

Mr. KRASSOWSKI (Division for Social Policy and Development), recalling that, in its resolution 50/107, the General Assembly had invited the Administrative Committee on Coordination to submit to the Assembly via Council reports on activities envisaged in support of the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, drew attention to the Annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for 1995 (E/1996/18), the report of the Secretary-General on coordination of the activities of the United Nations system for the eradication of poverty (E/1996/61) and the background information note E/1996/CRP.2.

Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union was pleased that the draft resolution which the Commission for Social Development was recommending to the Council for adoption, contained a multi-year programme of work providing for comprehensive consideration of themes particularly relevant to the Commission's responsibility for the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development.

The European Union welcomed the new framework for the functioning of the Commission set out in the draft resolution and noted with satisfaction that the

Commission had reiterated its invitation to the Secretary-General to consult with the United Nations Funds and Programmes and relevant international organizations, particularly the International Labour Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions, on how they might cooperate in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

The European Union also welcomed the changes in the methods of work of the Commission and the efforts that had been made to stimulate an informal dialogue within the Commission. The role of civil society in the follow-up and implementation process was very important as was the proposal that non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to participate in the work of the Commission and in monitoring the implementation process to the maximum extent possible.

The annualization of the Commission's meetings in the context of the agreed multi-year programme would facilitate intensified consideration of the issues involved in the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, and his delegation trusted that the proposed changes in the composition of the Commission would have the same effect. Governments that were members of the Commission should demonstrate the fullest possible commitment. In order to achieve that objective, Governments should whenever possible include in their delegations national experts on the themes under discussion.

The European Union believed that the Commission's secretariat should be strengthened to ensure that it could discharge its responsibilities effectively. The availability of timely, concise and action-orientated reports containing specific recommendations would also facilitate the Commission's work.

Ms. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it had been decided that the Commission for Social Development would assist the Economic and Social Council in monitoring, reviewing and appraising the progress achieved and the problems encountered in the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The agenda and work programme of the Commission stressed the importance attached to the follow-up of the World Summit for Social Development. The multi-year work programme had made it necessary to hold sessions of the Committee on an annual basis. The Group welcomed the expansion of the membership of the Commission and the annualization of its meetings, and trusted that other delegations would demonstrate the necessary commitment to ensuring that the Commission could

fulfil its mandate in an efficient manner, thus contributing to the restructuring and strengthening of the United Nations.

The Group also endorsed the general requirement that United Nations documents should be kept concise, clear, analytical and timely, with a focus on relevant issues. The comments in the report of the Commission for Social Development regarding adjustment of working methods to ensure effective follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the smoother functioning of the bureau were of special interest to her delegation.

The regional dimension was particularly important, and the Group had been behind efforts to enhance the role of the regional commissions in addressing regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields. Relevant programmes should involve capacity-building for science, technology and industrialization, development and utilization of natural resources and energy, infrastructure, communications, public sector reform and development of financial markets. In the process of strengthening collaboration between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, the regional commissions should seek cooperative working relations with the relevant units of the international financial institutions.

The Group wished to draw the Council's attention to draft decision I, saying that the proposed support group would be extremely valuable to the Commission since it was a cost-free mechanism.

Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland) said that his delegation had been concerned at the late publication of the documentation relating to crime prevention and criminal justice; the Council should bear in mind that some delegations had not had enough time to prepare for the forthcoming discussion on that issue.

Ms. ESPINOSA (Mexico) said that her delegation was similarly concerned at the unavailability of the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.